

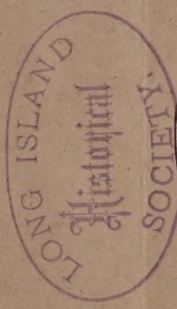
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DEPARTMENT

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ANNUAL REPORT  
OF  
THE HISTORIOGRAPHER  
OF THE  
CITY OF DETROIT.

FEBRUARY 20TH, 1883.



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OF

# The Historiographer,

OF THE

CITY OF DETROIT.

DETROIT, February 20th, 1883.

TO THE HON. THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DETROIT:

GENTLEMEN—The ordinance of 1843, under which, by the courtesy of your honorable body, I was appointed City Historiographer, makes it my duty to present an annual report. I do not find that my predecessors conformed to the ordinance, but a desire to further the interests of the city leads me to present a few facts of a practical, historic character.

During the last sixteen years the names of ninety-six streets in Detroit have been changed. In a single year, 1867, the names of forty-two streets were changed; and nearly every year since additional changes have been made. Within the past two years several streets have received new names, and other changes have been asked. This frequent changing of street names, in various parts of the city, and at irregular intervals, is a serious annoyance, and if all changes known to be desirable at any one time were made by the same ordinance, the public convenience would be greatly promoted. A list of all changes could then be preserved until the new names had gained a place in speech and memory.

The general plan of the city is well established, and all changes now desirable can be easily determined, and both citi-

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zens and strangers would be benefited by a systematic and thorough revision of the street names.

Comparatively few alterations are necessary. There is no occasion for delay, and every year increases the difficulties arising from duplicate names, or names of similar sound; and obstacles in the way of making changes will constantly increase.

On March 22, 1882, the city of St. Louis, Mo., provided by a single ordinance for changing the names of nearly two hundred streets; and also directed that thereafter no two streets should have the same name.

A similar ordinance is one of the real needs of our city, and would be an advantage to every merchant, express-man, letter-carrier, and messenger boy,—and, in fact, to every citizen.

The suburban duplication of the street names of Detroit is a growing evil, for which there is no excuse or necessity. The city cannot control the naming of streets in the adjoining townships, but such legislation should be secured as would prevent any suburban street, not in line with a city street, from being called by the same name. Sooner or later, large portions of Hamtramck and Springwells will be attached to the city, and the number of duplicate street names will be greatly increased, unless the evil is remedied.

The naming of streets ought not to be left to the caprice of individuals. Street names are for the public convenience, and more attention should be paid to sense and sound. The further introduction of names nearly allied in spelling and pronunciation to names already in use, should be prohibited. Vexatious delays, confusion and loss are of daily occurrence through the similarity of names, or because of mispronunciation. Street names should be of such a character that their pronunciation would be easily apparent.

Far less thought has been bestowed upon this subject than its importance demands. Some of our streets have such foolish and ill-sounding names that, should unforeseen improvements make their locality desirable, one of the first suggestions would be a new street name.



With a genealogy dating from the dawning of the 16th century, we would do well to give special heed to our historic past, and strive to preserve its memories in our street names as well as in our story. Street names approach immortality. Governments change, political parties die, officials and constituents pass into oblivion, buildings are burned, pavements uprooted, but well chosen street names usually live as long as a city stands. A street name is a more valuable, and a more perpetual memorial than a monument of bronze or granite. They may be destroyed or defaced, but street names live though a city is burned. Everything tends to perpetuate and preserve them—land titles, business notices, social facts, city records—and, in fact, almost all the details of municipal government unite to fasten them in the memory and hand them down to the future. There are no other names in connection with the life of a city that are so frequently used as the names of its streets; and no other names are so frequently thought of, and talked of by both residents and strangers. We are compelled to know and memorize them, and everything combines to repeat and reiterate them. As an instrumentality for preserving the remembrance of individuals and facts, they have no equal.

This is the oldest city in the west, and more attention should be paid to the heritage we possess in the founders of our city, and the facts of the past.

In gathering materials for the History of Detroit, I have obtained the date when every street in the city was first named, and also the origin or reason for the name of each of the nearly 600 streets of the city and its suburbs.

I have also had occasion to note the name of almost every person of prominence in our social and political life. Among these, there are many names that would confer honor on our city, if used in place of duplicate names of streets, and of other names that have no personal or historic value. Out of many desirable historic names, the following are as yet unused:

AMHERST—General Jeffrey Amherst was the first English Governor of Canada.



ANTHON—Dr. Geo. C. Anthon, a resident for many years during English rule, father of John and Charles Anthon, and uncle of C. E. Anthon, all widely known as authors and teachers.

ACADIA—Some of the refugees from Acadia came here to live.

BACON—Dr. Leonard Bacon, the noted Divine, born here in 1802.

BOONE—Daniel Boone, the noted hunter of Kentucky, was brought here, a prisoner, during the revolutionary war.

BEAVER—The beaver furs, originally to be obtained in this region, had much to do with the founding of the settlement, and millions of dollars worth were here shipped.

BUFFALO—Wild buffalos, in immense herds, formerly roamed over the very site of Detroit.

BIDDLE—John Biddle, first delegate to Congress from Michigan, resided here, held various offices, and was well known for his literary efforts.

CHAMPLAIN—The first white visitor to the region of the Lakes, and the first French Governor of New France.

CLARKE—Colonel George Rogers Clarke, of Virginia. His victory over Governor Hamilton, at Vincennes, was to the West what Washington's defeat of Cornwallis was to the East.

CHARLEVOIX—Father Peter Francis Xavier Charlevoix, the celebrated Jesuit traveler and author, who visited this post in 1721.

CHAPIN—Dr. Marshall Chapin, one of the best known physicians half a century ago; once Mayor of the city.

CELERON—Pierre de Celeron, Sieur de Blainville, commandant at Detroit at various times.

CHIPMAN—Henry Chipman, one of the Territorial Judges from 1827 to 1833.

DE PEYSTER—Colonel Arent Schuyler De Peyster, a noted English commandant of this place in 1781. A personal friend of Robert Burns, and himself an author.



DANE—Nathan Dane, the usually accredited author of the ordinance of 1787, which provided the first government.

DEL HALLÉ—First Franciscan Priest at Detroit—came with Cadillac; killed by an Indian in 1706.

FLETCHER—Wm. A. Fletcher, first Chief Justice of Michigan.

GRIFFIN—The first sail-vessel that ever passed Detroit; here in 1679.

HUNT—Col. H. J. Hunt, second Mayor of Detroit, a noted citizen.

HOFFMAN—Geo. Hoffman, first Register of United States Land Office, and second Postmaster of Detroit.

JOHNSON—Colonel R. M. Johnson, Vice President of the United States. Here in war of 1812—reported to have killed Tecumseh.

KUNDIG—Father Martin Kundig, a German Catholic Priest, who did valiant and praiseworthy service in the cholera season of 1832.

LANMAN—Author of First History of Michigan, published in 1839; then a resident of the city.

LYON—Lucius Lyon, first State Senator from Michigan, lived in Detroit.

MONTETH—Rev. John Monteith, first Pastor of the first Protestant Church built in Detroit, and first President of the University.

MCCARTHER—General Duncan McArthur. His brigade was the first to land at Detroit in the war of 1813, and took possession of the town.

MOHAWK—A reminder of the old Dutch merchants who, in revolutionary days, came here to trade.

MORELL—Geo. Morell, first Circuit Judge of Wayne County.

NEWARK—Now Niagara, the seat of the first Canadian Parliament exercising rule over Detroit.

PERRY—Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, whose victory on Lake Erie restored this region to the United States.

QUEBEC—The first colonists came from that place.

ROGERS—Major Robert Rogers, first English commandant.



SAVOY—A number of the early settlers came from Savoy.

SARGENT—Winthrop Sargent, first Secretary of N. W. Territory, and author of the proclamation which laid out Wayne County in 1796.

SWAN—Name of the vessel that brought the first American troops in 1796.

SHELDON—John P. Sheldon, publisher of the first regular newspaper in Michigan.

SCHOOLCRAFT—H. R. Schoolcraft, noted author on Indian affairs; a resident in 1820, and from 1836 to 1840.

SPEED—J. J. Speed, old citizen and proprietor of the first telegraph in operation in Detroit.

TONTY—Sieur Alphonse de Tonty, Baron de Palude, the successor of Cadillac in command of Detroit. He died here and was buried in St. Anne's.

TROWBRIDGE—Charles C. Trowbridge, our oldest citizen, ex-Mayor, and author of the first financial system of the city.

VALLIANT—Father Valliant, the first Jesuit Priest at Detroit; came with Cadillac.

VIGO—Francis Vigo, who gave the information to Col. George Rogers Clarke that enabled him to capture Gov. Hamilton, and redeem the west from British rule.

WOLFE—Gen. James Wolfe, who captured Quebec from the French in 1759, and thus obtained possession of Detroit. We have preserved the name of Montcalm whom he defeated.

WHITNEY—A. G. Whitney, the first Recorder of the city.

WILCOX—Gen. O. B. Wilcox, author of "Shoe-pac," and other works. Colonel of 1st Michigan Regiment in the war with the South

Either of the foregoing names could, with great propriety, be substituted in place of certain names now in use.

The name "Fort street east" should be discontinued, as two



entire blocks separate this street from "Fort street west," which received its title several years the earlier. "Fort street west" has a significance, from the fact that old Fort Shelby was on its route; but there is no significance in the name Fort as applied to Fort street east.

Edwards street is nearly in line with and might well be changed to Ohio or Bellair, as there is an Edwards street in Springwells.

We have streets called Beech, Beecher, and Beecher Place. The first and last named could be changed to advantage.

Berlin has no particular significance as a street name, and there is a Berlin street in Springwells.

Baldwin Place would be more appropriately named Napoleon Place, as it very nearly connects with that street, and there is a Baldwin avenue in Hamtramck.

We have a Canfield street and a Canfield avenue in entirely different parts of the city. Canfield street should be changed.

We have Grand street, Grandy avenue and Grand River avenue. The first name can certainly be spared.

Lafayette street east is entirely disconnected with Lafayette avenue, and there is no sound reason for permitting the name of Lafayette street to remain unchanged. Two streets recorded by the names Howard and Hennepin are now connected in direct line with Lafayette avenue, and should be so named.

Macomb street was not named until 1835, while Macomb avenue, which honors the same family, received its name in 1807. The former ought to be changed.

There is a Washington street and Washington avenue. Washington street is of recent origin and could be changed with advantage.

There is a Williams street and also a Williams avenue. Williams avenue is the more recent street, and in a comparatively thinly settled portion of the city, and a change in name would be eminently proper.



A street bearing the name Spencer has existed in Detroit for many years, and yet, during 1881, a new street in another locality was duly recorded "Spencer street."

The mere statement of this last fact is a sufficient reason for attention being given to the subject; and I respectfully suggest that the evils indicated be remedied by appropriate action.

Very respectfully,

SILAS FARMER.







